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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS: NATIONALISTS GAIN, IAF LOSES BIG, FIRST WOMAN WINS MAYORALTY

REF: A. AMMAN 3207

- 1B. AMMAN 3162
- 1C. AMMAN 3126
- 1D. AMMAN 2985

Nationalists Upset Islamists in Key Contests

11. (SBU) The political clash pitting Islamists and pro-government nationalists in Jordanian municipal elections on July 31 has left the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, out of office in all of the major mayoral races in which it competed. IAF candidates lost in the Front's traditional strongholds of Irbid and Zarqa, and could not capitalize on their front-runner status in Madaba and Karak (more on IAF withdrawal septel). While the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has yet to publish official vote counts, newspapers are reporting on the winners of the several key contests that the Embassy had been following closely. The below vote totals are based on newspaper reports and may not reflect final and complete vote results.

12. (SBU) Overall, the municipal elections were held in an enthusiastic atmosphere with a clear underlying competition between pro-government and IAF political forces. While there were allegations of electoral abuses levied by the Islamists, and some incidents of violent confrontation between supporters of rival candidates, roving Embassy teams witnessed no overt wrongdoing at voting centers or during the voting and vote-counting processes (election atmospherics to be reported septel).

Zarqa: Islamists Routed in IAF Bastion

13. (SBU) Zarqa's mayoralty was won by pro-government independent Mohammad Musa Al Ghweri, in an upset of the favored IAF candidate Saud Abu Mahfudh (ref C). Needing to receive an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 votes to win, newspapers reported that Ghweri earned 42,933 votes, a large victory in this IAF stronghold.

Madaba: Christian King-Makers Help Decide Mayoralty

14. (SBU) The pro-government candidate in multi-confessional Madaba, Arif Abu Ruwajeh, beat the favored IAF candidate Ziad Shawabkeh by garnering 11,228 votes (observers had estimated that 10,000 to 12,000 votes would be needed to win - ref B). He also won in the face of a strong showing by Palestinian Hamed Al Zen who drew support from the local Palestinian refugee community.

Irbid: Mounting IAF Frustrations

15. (SBU) The pro-Government independent Abdulrauf Al Tal is the projected upset winner against the front-running IAF candidate Nabil Kofahi in the traditionally IAF-leaning city of Irbid (ref B). Irbid's vote count has not yet been officially released due to the late closing of the polls in that northern city on election night.

Karak: IAF Loses Again

16. (SBU) Karak saw more of the same results for the IAF. Independent Ahmed Al Dmour won the race for mayor, with 5214 votes, earning the spot ahead of early leader Abdulhakim Al Ma'aiteh of the IAF (ref B).

Jordan's First Woman to Win a Mayoralty

17. (SBU) In an expected, but historic, first, Rana Hajayeh won the mayoralty of the town of Al Hassa in Tafileh governorate (ref A). She is the first Jordanian woman ever to win a mayoralty. (She was appointed mayor of the same town in 2003.) Ms. Hajayeh is a contact of the Embassy and participated in a 2006 International Visitor Leadership Program on "State and Local Government." The Jordanian Prime Minister, in a late-night off-the-record visit with journalists camped out at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs awaiting election results, beamed to reporters as he hailed the first election of a Jordanian woman mayor.

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